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II. CLAIM AMENDMENTS

Please amend the claims as indicated in the following listing:

1. (currently amended) A method for automatically saving instant messaging transcripts to a searchable repository connected by the Internet to a plurality of computers comprising:

responsive to a user specifying a topic;

automatically attaching a topic tag corresponding to the topic to a segment of an

instant messaging transcript as a topic tag metadata; and

saving the segment to the searchable repository.

2. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

specifying an identifier; and

attaching the identifier to an instant message transcript as an identifier metadata.

3. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

searching the repository for the topic tag; and

responsive to finding the topic tag, displaying the segment.

4. (original) The method of claim 2 further comprising:

scanning instant messaging transcripts in the repository for a segment with the identifier metadata;

responsive to finding a segment with the identifier metadata, sending a notification to an addressee on an alert notification list.

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5. (original) The method of claim 2 further comprising:

 scanning instant messaging transcripts in the repository for a segment with the
 identifier metadata;

 responsive to finding a segment with the identifier metadata, exporting the
 segment to a pre-designated addressee.
6. (original) The method of claim 3 further comprising:

 scanning instant messaging transcripts in the repository for a segment with the
 topic tag metadata;

 responsive to finding a segment with the topic tag metadata, sending a
 notification to an addressee on an alert notification list.
7. (original) The method of claim 3 further comprising:

 scanning instant messaging transcripts in the repository for a segment with the
 topic tag metadata;

 responsive to finding a segment with the topic tag metadata, exporting the
 segment to a pre-designated addressee.
8. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the searchable repository is on a client
 computer.
9. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the searchable repository is on a server
 computer.

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10. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the identifier comprises user characteristics.
11. cancelled.
12. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - specifying that all instant message transcripts will be saved; and
 - providing for an automatic saving of all instant messaging transcripts to the repository.
13. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - specifying that instant message transcripts will be saved according to a selection criteria; and
 - providing for an automatic saving of all instant messaging transcripts meeting the criteria.
14. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
 - automatically determining whether a turn has occurred; and
 - responsive to determining whether a turn has occurred, automatically determining whether a topic shift has occurred.
15. (currently amended) The method of claim ~~42~~ 14 further comprising:

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responsive to determining that a topic shift has occurred, automatically identifying a new topic; and

automatically attaching ~~the a~~ new topic marker to a topic segment corresponding to ~~the a~~ chat transcript following the new topic marker.

16. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
displaying a prompt asking a user to identify a topic.
17. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
displaying a list of available pre-designated topics for user selection.
18. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
presenting a topic tag to a user for review; and
responsive to the user reviewing the topic tag, distinguishing the topic tag.
19. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
presenting a topic tag to a user for review; and
responsive to the user reviewing the topic tag, accepting the topic tag.
20. (original) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
presenting a topic tag to a user for review; and
responsive to the user reviewing the topic tag, and the user failing to distinguish the topic tag or to accept the topic tag, entering a default topic tag.

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21. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
- displaying ~~the~~ a plurality of search results to the user; and
 - obtaining a feedback regarding the plurality of search results from the user.
22. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the steps of specifying a topic and attaching a topic tag corresponding to the topic to a segment of an instant messaging transcript as a topic tag metadata, are performed automatically by a computer.
23. (original) The method of claim 1 wherein the step of specifying a topic may take place retrospectively after completion of an instant messaging transcript.
24. (original) A method comprising:
- storing a structured instant message transcript in a repository on a server computer connected to the Internet; and
 - using a filter in a program on a remote computer, searching the repository for a metadata attached to a segment of the structured instant message.
25. (original) The method of claim 24 further comprising:
- responsive to finding the metadata, displaying an instant message transcript segment corresponding to the topic tag.
26. (original) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

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responsive to finding the metadata, sending a notification to an addressee on an alert notification list.

27. (original) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

responsive to finding the metadata, exporting the segment to a pre-designated addressee.

28. (original) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

specifying that instant message transcripts will be saved according to a selection criteria; and

providing for an automatic saving of all instant messaging transcripts meeting the criteria.

29. (currently amended) The method of claim 24 further comprising:

automatically determining whether a turn has occurred; and

responsive to determining whether a turn has occurred, automatically determining whether ~~when~~ a topic shift has occurred;

responsive to determining that ~~at the~~ topic shift has occurred, automatically identifying a new metadata; and

automatically attaching the new metadata to a second segment.

30. (original) A program product operable on a computer comprising:

a computer-usable medium;

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wherein the computer usable medium comprises instructions for a computer to perform steps comprising:

- prompting a user to specify a topic;
- attaching a topic tag corresponding to the topic to a segment of an instant messaging transcript as a topic tag metadata; and
- saving the segment to a searchable repository connected to the computer-usable medium by the Internet.

31. (original) The program product of claim 30 wherein the step of prompting a user to specify a topic is replaced with selecting an automatic process so that the step of attaching a topic tag corresponding to the topic to a segment of an instant messaging transcript as a topic tag metadata is performed automatically by the computer following instructions from the computer-usable medium.

32. (original) The program product of claim 30 wherein the step of prompting the user to specify a topic is replaced with the step of selecting retrospective identification of a topic, and responsive to selecting retrospective identification of a topic, retrospectively identifying a topic upon completion of an instant messaging transcript.

33. (original) A system for saving instant message transcripts comprising:

- a first computer having a first memory and a first processor;

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a second computer having a second memory and a second processor connected to the first computer;

a repository connected to the first computer and the second computer;

a first instruction in the memory of the first computer to cause the processor to prompt a user to specify a topic for a chat;

responsive to the user specifying a topic for the chat, a second instruction in the memory of the first computer to cause the processor to attach a topic tag corresponding to the topic to a segment of an instant messaging transcript as a topic tag metadata;

a third instruction to save the segment to the searchable repository

34. (currently amended) The ~~program-product-system~~ of claim 33 wherein the first instruction is replaced with a fourth instruction for prompting the user to select an automatic process, and responsive to the user selecting an automatic process, a fifth instruction to cause the processor to automatically create a topic tag metadata and attach the topic tag metadata to an instant messaging transcript segment.

35. (currently amended) The ~~program-product-system~~ of claim 33 wherein the first instruction is replaced with a sixth instruction to prompt the user to select retrospective identification of a topic, and responsive to the user selecting retrospective identification of a topic, a seventh instruction to prompt the user to retrospectively identify a topic upon completion of an instant messaging transcript segment.